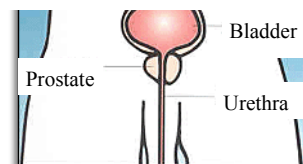


Screening for Prostate Cancer

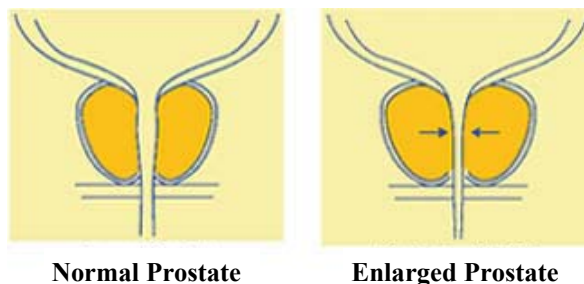
What is the Prostate Gland?

The prostate is a walnut sized gland located near the bladder. All men have a prostate gland. This gland controls the release of urine and produces fluid at the time of ejaculation.



Who has Prostate Enlargement?

Fifty percent (50%) of men over 60 years have a large prostate gland. This percentage goes up as men get older. This enlargement is not cancerous. An enlarged prostate gland will cause a weak flow of urine or a problem trying to start urine. An enlarged prostate can also cause a blood test for prostate cancer to be higher than normal. This blood test is called *prostate specific antigen*, also called PSA test



Who gets Prostate Cancer?

Prostate cancer can occur in men of all ages. It is very rare in men under 45 years. About 80% of all prostate cancer is in men over 65. African-American men and men with a father or brother who have prostate cancer are at higher risk of getting prostate cancer. Men exposed to Agent Orange may also be at high risk of developing prostate cancer.

How do I know if I have Prostate Cancer?

Your health care provider is the one who can help answer this question.

The way to get a definite answer is not easy. There are two screening methods to test for prostate cancer.

One method is the **PSA blood test**. This is a simple blood test. The results of this blood test may be hard to interpret. Cancer might be present if the blood test result is higher than normal. But remember we said earlier that an enlarged prostate could also cause the PSA blood test to be higher than normal. So a positive test does not mean you have cancer.

The second method is the **digital rectal exam**. This is done by your provider. Your provider can feel if there are lumps in the prostate.

If the exam of your prostate feels abnormal, or your PSA test is high, you may need a biopsy. A biopsy is the only method to really determine if there is cancer present. This is an invasive procedure. It is a type of minor surgery. And there are risks with any type of surgery.

What do VA doctors advise?

The advice for each patient is different. What you do depends upon you. Talk with your primary care provider. You can have a rectal exam, or a PSA test or both. Talk with your provider about the risks and benefits of screening for prostate cancer. Read the risks and benefits lists to see if you want to be tested, then talk with your provider.

What are the benefits of being tested for prostate cancer?

- ☒ The screening may find cancer earlier in its growth.

What are the risks of being tested for prostate cancer?

- ☒ You may have anxiety if the test is not normal
- ☒ You may have to have a biopsy even if there is no cancer.
- ☒ The PSA test may miss cancer.
- ☒ Treatment of early prostate cancer may not help men live longer.

What are the Treatments if I have Prostate Cancer?

Prostate cancer grows slowly. Most men who have prostate cancer die from something other than prostate cancer.

There are 3 choices in the treatment of prostate cancer. The choices are:

- Surgery
- Radiation
- Watchful Waiting

Surgery usually removes the prostate and surrounding tissue.

Radiation Therapy uses high energy waves to kill cancer cells and shrink the cancer.

Watchful Waiting is when treatment is not started immediately. Your provider will complete regular exams to tell if the cancer is growing.

What are the Complications from Surgery or Radiation

Treating early prostate cancer may not help men live longer and there are risks. One rare complication is death. Other complications can include impotence, loss of urinary control, or scarring of the urinary tract which makes it harder to urinate. Radiation patients may develop rectal problems.

If in doubt, Ask your Primary Care Provider

As you can tell, this is not a quick or easy decision. Talk with your provider. Your provider can give you the medical information for you to decide.